

(1)
VENICE PRESERVED;

OR,

88
A PLOT DISCOVERED.

T R A G E D Y.

Written by Mr. Thomas Otway.

D U B L I N:

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Dramatis Personæ.

<i>Duke of Venice,</i>		MR. BRANSBY.
<i>Priuli, Father to Belvidera, a Senator,</i>		MR. HAVARD.
<i>Bedamar, the Spanish Ambassador,</i>		MR. PACKER.
JAFFIER,	CONSPIRATORS.	MR. POWELL.
PIERRE,		MR. HOLLAND.
Renault,		MR. BURTON,
Spinosa,		MR. STEVENS.
Theodore,		
Eliot,		
Revellido,		
Durand,		
Mezzano,		
Bramveil,		
Ternon,		
Brabe,		
BELVIDERA,		Mrs. YATES.

Two Women, Attendants on Belvidera.

The Council of Ten.

Officer, Guard, Friar, Executioner, and Rabble.



VENICE PRESERVED;

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ACT I. SCENE I.

A Street in Venice.

Enter Priuli and Jaffier.

Pri. **N**O more! I'll hear no more; be gone and leave me.

Jaff. Not hear me! by my suffering, but you shall!
My lord, my lord! I'm not that abject wretch
You think me: Patience! where's the distance throws
Me back so far, but I may boldly speak
In right, tho' proud oppression will not hear me?

Pri. Have you not wrong'd me?

Jaff. Wrong'd you!

A 3

Pri.

Pri. Yes, wrong'd me; in the nicest point,
 The honour of my house, you've done me wrong.
 You may remember (for I now will speak,
 And urge its baseness) when you first came home
 From travel, with such hopes as made you look'd on
 By all men's eyes, a youth of expectation;
 Pleas'd with your growing virtue, I received you;
 Courted, and sought to raise you to your merits;
 My house, my table, nay, my fortune too,
 My very self was yours, you might have us'd me
 To your best service; like an open friend
 I treated, trusted you, and thought you mine:
 When, in requital of my best endeavours,
 You treacherously practis'd to undo me,
 Seduc'd the weakness of my age's darling,
 My only child, and stole her from my bosom:
 Oh! *Belvidera*!

Jaff. 'Tis to me you owe her.
 Childless you had been else, and in the grave
 Your name extinct; no more *Prinuli* heard of.
 You may remember, scarce five years are past,
 Since in your brigantine you sail'd to see
 The *Adriatick* wedded by our duke;
 And I was with you: Your unskillful pilot
 Dash'd us upon a rock; when to your boat
 You made for safety: Enter'd first yourself;
 Th' affrighted *Belvidera*, following next,
 As she stood trembling on the vessel's side,
 Was by a wave wash'd off into the deep;
 When instantly I plung'd into the sea,
 And, buffeting the billows to her rescue,
 Redeem'd her life with half the loss of mine.
 Like a rich conquest, in one hand I bore her,
 And with the other dash'd the saucy waves,
 That throng'd and press'd to rob me of my prize:
 I brought her, gave her to your despairing arms:
 Indeed you thank'd me; but a nobler gratitude
 Rose in her soul: For from that hour she lov'd me,
 Till for her life she paid me with herself.

Pri. You stole her from me; like a thief you stole
 her,

At dead of night ; that cursed hour you chose
To rifle me of all my heart held dear.
May all your joys in her prove false like mine ;
A sterile fortune, and a barren bed,
Attend you both : continual discord make
Your days and nights bitter and grievous, still
May the hard hand of a vexatious need
Oppress and grind you ; till at last you find
The curse of disobedience all your portion.

Jaff. Half of your curse you have bestow'd in vain ;
Heav'n has already crown'd our faithful loves
With a young boy, sweet as his mother's beauty :
May he live to prove more gentle than his grandfire,
And happier than his father.

Pri. Rather live
To bate thee for his bread, and din your ears
With hungry cries ; whilst his unhappy mother
Sits down and weeps in bitterness of want.

Jaff. You talk, as if 'twould please you.

Pri. 'Twould, by heaven !

Jaff. Would I were in my grave.

Pri. And she too with thee :

For, living here, you're but my cursed remembrances,
I once was happy.——No more.

Jaff. Yes, all, and then adieu for ever.
There's not a wretch, that lives on common charity,
But's happier than me : For I've known
The luscious sweets of plenty ; every night
Have slept with soft content about my head,
And never wak'd but to a joyful morning :
Yet now must fall like a full ear of corn,
Whose blossom 'scap'd, yet's wither'd in the ripening.

Pri. Home, and be humble, study to retrench ;
Discharge the lazy vermin of thy hall,
Those pageants of thy folly :
Reduce the glitt'ring trappings of thy wife
To humble weeds, fit for thy little state :
Then to some suburb cottage both retire ;
Drudge to feed loathsome life ; get brats and starve—
Home, home, I say.——

[Exit.
Jaff.

Jaff. Yes. if my heart would let me —
 This proud, this swelling heart: home I would go,
 But that my doors are hateful to my eyes,
 Fill'd and damm'd up with gaping creditors. —
 I've now not fifty ducats in the world,
 Yet still I'm in love, and pleas'd with ruin.
 Oh! *Belvidera*! Oh! she is my wife —
 And we will bear our wayward fate together,
 But ne'er know comfort more.

Enter PIERRE.

Pier. My friend, good-morrow,
 How fares the honest part'ner of my heart?
 What, melancholy? not a word to spare me!

Jaff. I'm thinking, *Pierre*, how that damn'd starving
 quality,

Call'd honesty, got footing in the world.

Pier. Why, powerful villainy first set it up,
 For its own ease and safety: honest men
 Are the soft easy cushions, on which knaves
 Repose and fatten: Were all mankind villains,
 They'd starve each other; lawyers would want prac-
 tice,

Cut-throats rewards: Each man would kill his bro-
 ther

Himself; none would be paid or hang'd for murder:

Honesty! 'twas a cheat invented first

To bind the hands of bold deserving rogues,

That fools and cowards might sit safe in power,

And lord it uncontroll'd above their betters.

Jaff. Then honesty is but a notion?

Pier. Nothing else,

Like wit, much talk'd of, not to be defin'd:

He that pretends to most, too, has least share in't:

'Tis a ragged virtue. Honesty! no more on't.

Jaff. Sure thou art honest?

Pier. So indeed men think me;

But they are mistaken, *Jaffier*: I am a rogue

As well as they;

A fine, gay, bold-fac'd villain, as thou seest me.
 'Tis true, I pay my debts, when they're contracted;
 I steal from no man; would not cut a throat
 To gain admission to a great man's purse,
 Or a whore's bed; I'd not betray my friend
 To get his place or fortune; I scorn to flatter
 A blown-up fool above me, or crush the wretch be-
 neath me:

Yet, *Jaffier*, for all this, I am a villain.

Jaff. A villain!

Pier. Yes, and a most notorious villain;
 To see the sufferings of my fellow-creatures,
 And own myself a man: to see our senators
 Cheat the deluded people with a shew
 Of liberty, which yet they ne'er must taste of.
 They say, by them our hands are free from fetters,
 Yet whom they please they lay in basest bonds;
 Bring whom they please to infamy and sorrow;
 Drive us like wrecks down the rough tide of power,
 Whilst no hold is to save us from destruction:
 All that bear this are villains, and I one,
 Not to rouse up at the greatest call of nature,
 And check the growth of these domestic spoilers,
 That make us slaves, and tell us 'tis our charter.

Jaff. I think no safety can be here for virtue,
 And grieve my friend, as much as thou, to live
 In such a wretched state as this of *Venice*,
 Where all agree to spoil the publick good;
 And villains fatten with the brave man's labours.

Pier. We've neither safety, unity nor peace, my
 friend,

For the foundation's lost of common good;
 Justice is lame as well as blind amongst us;
 The laws (corrupted to their ends that make 'em)
 Serve but for instruments of some new tyranny,
 That every day starts up to enslave us deeper.
 Now could this glorious cause but find out friends
 To do it right, oh *Jaffier*! then might'st thou
 Not wear these seals of woe upon thy face;
 The proud *Prinzi* should be taught humanity,

And

And learn to value such a son as thou art.
I dare not speak, but my heart bleeds this moment.

Jaff. Curs'd be the cause, though I thy friend be
part on't:

Let me partake the troubles of thy bosom,
For I am us'd to mis'ry, and perhaps,
May find a way to sweeten't to thy spirit.

Pier. Too soon 'twill reach thy knowledge——

Jaff. Then from thee
Let it proceed. There's virtue in thy friendship,
Would make the saddest tale of sorrow pleasing,
Strengthen my constancy, and welcome ruin.

Pier. Then thou art ruin'd!

Jaff. That I long since knew;
I and ill fortune have been long acquainted.

Pier. I pass'd this very moment by thy doors,
And found them guarded by a troop of villains;
The sons of public rapine were destroying.
They told me, by the sentence of the law
They had commission to seize all thy fortune:
Nay more, *Priuli's* cruel hand had sign'd it.
Here stood a ruffian with a horrid face,
Lording it o'er a pile of massy plate,
Tumbled into a heap for public sale;
There was another making villainous jests
At thy undoing; he had ta'en possession
Of all thy antient most domestic ornaments,
Rich hangings intermix'd and wrought with gold:
The very bed, which on thy wedding-night
Received thee to the arms of *Belviaera*,
The scene of all thy joys, was violated
By the coarse hands of filthy dungeon villains,
And thrown amongst the common lumber.

Jaff. Now thank heav'n——

Pier. Thank heav'n! for what?

Jaff. That I'm not worth a ducat.

Pier. Curse thy dull stars, and the worst fate of
Venice,

Where brothers, friends, and fathers are all false;
Where there's no truth, no trust; where innocence
Stoops

Stoops under vile oppression, and vice lords it.
 Hadst thou but seen, as I did, how at last
 Thy beauteous *Belvidera*, like a wretch
 That's doom'd to banishment, came weeping forth,
 Shining through tears, like April suns in showers.
 Whilst two young virgins, on whose arms she lean'd,
 Kindly looked up, and at her grief grew sad,
 As if they catch'd the sorrows that fell from her ;
 E'en the loud rabble, that were gather'd round
 To see the sight, stood mute when they beheld her ;
 Govern'd their roaring throats; and grumbled pity :
 I could have hugged the greasy rogues ; they pleas'd
 me.

Jaff. I thank thee for this story from my soul,
 Since now I know the worst that can befall me :
 Ah, *Pierre* ! I have a heart that could have borne
 The roughest wrong my fortune could have done
 me ;

But when I think what *Belvidera* feels,
 The bitterness her tender spirits taste of,
 I own myself a coward : Bear my weakness ;
 If throwing thus my arms about thy neck,
 I play the boy, and blubber in thy bosom :
 Oh ! I shall drown thee with my sorrows.

Pier. Burn,

First burn and level *Venice* to thy ruin.
 What ! starve like beggars' brats in frosty weather
 Under a hedge, and whine ourselves to death !
 Thou, or thy cause, shall never want assistance,
 Whilst I have blood or fortune fit to serve thee :
 Command my heart ; for thou'rt every way its master.

Jaff. No, there's a secret pride in bravely dying.

Pier. Rats die in holes and corners, dogs run mad ;
 Man knows a braver remedy for sorrow ;
 Revenge, the attribute of gods ; they stamp'd it
 With their great image on our natures. Die !
 Consider well the cause that calls upon thee ;
 And, if thou'rt base enough, die then : Remember
 Thy *Belvidera* suffers, *Belvidera* !
 Die——damn first——what ! Be decently interr'd
 In

In a church-yard, and mingle thy brave dust
With stinking rogues, that rot in dirty winding-
sheets,

Surfeit-slain fools, the common dung o'th' soil!

Jaff. Oh!

Pier. Well said, out with't, swear a little——

Jaff. Swear! By sea and air; by earth, by heav'n
and hell,

I will revenge my *Belvidera's* tears.

Hark, thee, my friend—*Priuli*—is—a senator.

Pier. A dog.

Jaff. Agreed.

Pier. Shoot him.

Jaff. With all my heart.

No more; where shall we meet at night?

Pier. I'll tell thee:

On the *Rialto*, every night at twelve,

I take my evening's walk of Meditation:

There we two'll meet, and talk of precious mischief—

Jaff. Farewell.

Pier. At twelve.

Jaff. At any hour; my plagues
Will keep me waking.

[*Exit Pierre.*]

Tell me why, good heaven,

Thou mad'st me what I am, with all the spirit,

Aspiring thoughts, and elegant desires,

That fill the happiest man? Ah rather why

Didst thou not form me sordid as my fate,

Base-minded, dull, and fit to carry burdens?

Why have I sense to know the curse that's on me?

Is this just dealing, nature? *Belvidera*!

Enter Belvidera, led by two Virgins.

Poor *Belvidera*!

Bel. Lead me, lead me, my virgins,
To that kind voice. My lord, my love, my refuge!
Happy my eyes, when they behold thy face!
My heavy heart will leave its doleful beating

At

At sight of thee, and bound with sprightly joys.
Oh smile ! as when our loves were in their spring,
And chear my fainting soul.

Jaff. As when our loves
Were in their spring ! has then our fortune chang'd ?
Art thou not *Belvidera*, still the same,
Kind, good, and tender, as my arms first found thee ?
If thou art alter'd, where shall I have harbour ?
Where ease my loaded heart ? Oh ! where complain ?

Bel. Does this appear like change, or love decaying,
When thus I throw myself into thy bosom,
With all the resolution of strong truth ?

I joy more in thee,
Than did thy mother when she hugg'd thee first,
And bless'd the gods for all her travail past.

Jaff. Can there in woman be such glorious faith
Sure all ill stories of thy sex are false !
Oh woman ! lovely woman ! Nature made thee
To temper man : We had been brutes without you :
Angels are painted fair to look like you :
There's in you all that we believe of heaven,
Amazing brightness, purity and truth,
Eternal joy, and everlasting love.

Bel. If love be treasure, we'll be wond'rous rich ;
O ! lead me to some desert wide and wild,
Barren as our misfortunes, where my soul
May have its vent, where I may tell aloud,
To the high heav'ns, and ev'ry list'ning planet,
With what a boundless stock my bosom's fraught.

Jaff. Oh *Belvidera* ! doubly I'm a beggar,
Undone by fortune and in debt to thee.
Want, worldly want, that hungry meagre fiend,
Is at my heels, and chaces me in view.
Can'st thou bear cold and hunger ? can these limbs,
Fram'd for the tender offices of love,
Endure the bitter gripes of smarting poverty ?
When banish'd by our miseries abroad
(As suddenly we shall be) to seek out
In some far climate, where our names are strangers,
For charitable succour ; wilt thou then,

B

When

When in a bed of straw we shrink together,
 And the bleak winds shall whistle round our heads;
 Wilt thou then talk thus to me? Wilt thou then
 Hush my cares thus, and shelter me with love?

Bel. Oh! I will love thee, even in madness love
 thee;

'Tho' my distracted senses should forsake me,
 I'd find some intervals, when my poor heart
 Should 'swage itself, and be let loose to thine.
 'Tho' the bare earth be all our resting-place,
 Its roots our food, some elest our habitation,
 I'll make this arm a pillow for thine head;
 As thou fighting ly'st, and swell'd with sorrow,
 Creep to thy bosom, pour the balm of love
 Into thy soul, and kiss thee to thy rest;
 Then praise our god, and watch thee till the morning.

Jaff. Hear this, you heav'ns! and wonder how you
 made her:

Reign, reign, ye monarchs that divide the world,
 Busy rebellion ne'er will let you know
 Tranquility and happiness like mine;
 Like gaudy ships, the obsequious billows fall,
 And rise again, to lift you in your pride;
 They wait but for a storm, and then devour you:
 I in my private bark already wreck'd,
 Like a poor merchant driven to unknown land,
 That had by chance pack'd up his choicest treasure
 In one dear casket, and sav'd only that;
 Since I must wander farther on the shore,
 Thus hug my little, but my precious store,
 Resolv'd to scorn, and trust my fate no more. [Ex.

A C T II. S C E N E I.

*The Rialto.**Enter Jaffier.*

Jaff. I'M here ; and thus, the shades of night around
me,
I look as if all hell were in my heart,
And I in hell. Nay, surely 'us so with me !
For, every step I tread, methinks some fiend
Knocks at my breast, and bids it not be quiet.
I've heard how desperate wretches, likemyself,
Have wander'd out at this dead time of night,
To meet the foe of mankind in his walk ;
Sure I'm so curs'd, that, tho' of heav'n forsaken,
No minister of darkness cares to tempt me.
Hell, hell, why sleep'st thou ?

Enter Pierre.

Pier. Sure I've staid too long :
The clock has struck, and I may lose my proselyte.
Speak, who goes there ?

Jaff. A dog, that comes to howl
At yonder moon. What's he, that asks the question ?

Pier. A friend to dogs, for they are honest creatures,
And ne'er betray their masters, never fawn
On any that they love not. Well met, friend

Jaffier !

Jaff. The same. O *Pierre*, thou'rt come in season,
I was just going to pray.

Pier. Ah ! that's mechanic ;
No praying ; it spoil's business, and time's precious.
Where's *Belvidera* ?

Jaff. For a day or two
I've lodg'd her privately, till I see farther

What fortune will do with me. Prithee, friend,
If thou would'st have me fit to hear good counsel,
Speak not of *Belvidera*—

Pier. Speak not of her!

Jaff. Oh no!

Pier. Not name her? May be I wish her well.

Jaff. Whom well!

Pier. Thy wife, thy lovely *Belvidera*.

I hope a man may wish his friend's wife well,
And no harm done.

Jaff. Yare merry, *Pierre*.

Pier. I am so:

Thou shalt smile too, and *Belvidera* smile;

We'll all rejoice: here's something to buy pins;

[Gives him a purse.]

Marriage is chargeable.

Jaff. I but half wish'd

To see the devil, and he's here already. Well!

What must this buy, rebellion, murder, treason?

Tell me, which way I must be damn'd for this.

Pier. When last we parted, we'd no qualms like
these,

But entertain'd each other's thoughts like men,
Whose souls were well acquainted. Is the world
Reform'd since our last meeting; what new miracles
Have happen'd? Has *Priuli's* heart relented?
Can he be honest?

Jaff. Kind heav'n let heavy curses
Gall his old age; cramps, aches rack his bones,
And bitterest disquiet wring his heart.

Pier. Nay could'st thou not
As well, my friend, have stretch'd the curse to all
The senate round, as to one single villain?

Jaff. Could I kill with cursing,
By heav'n I know not thirty heads in *Venice*
Should not be blasted: Senators should rot
Like dogs on dunghills:

Oh! for a curse to kill with!

Pier. Daggers, daggers are much better!

Jaff. Ha!

Pier.

Pier. Daggers.

Jaff. But where ate they ?

Pier. Oh ! a thousand

May be dispos'd in honest hands in *Venice*.

Jaff. Thou talk'st in clouds.

Pier. But yet a heart half wrong'd,
As thine has been, would find the meaning, *Jaffier*.

Jaff. A thousand daggers all in honest hands !
And have I not a friend will stick one here ?

Pier. Yes, if I thought thou wert not to be cherish'd
T'a nobler purpose, I would be that friend ;
But thou hast better friends ; friends whom thy
wrongs

Have made thy friends ; friends worthy to be call'd so.
I'll trust thee with a secret ; There are spirits
This hour at work. But as thou art a man,
Whom I have pick'd and chosen from the world,
Swear that thou wilt be true to what I utter ;
And when I've told thee that which only gods,
And men like gods, are privy to, then swear
No chance or change shall wrest it from thy bosom.

Jaff. When thou would'st bind me, is there need
of oaths ?

I know thy heart so well, I dare lay mine
Before thee, set it to what point thou wilt.

Pier. Nay, 'tis a cause thou wilt be fond of, *Jaffier* ;
For it is founded on the noblest basis,
Our liberties, our natural inheritance.
There's no religion, no hypocrisy in't ;
We'll do the business, and ne'er fast and pray for't :
Openly act a deed the world may gaze
With wonder at, and envy when 'tis done.

Jaff. For liberty !

Pier. For liberty, my friend ;
Thou shalt be freed from base *Prinli's* tyranny ;
And thy sequester'd fortunes heal'd again ;
I shall be free from those opprobrious wrongs,
That press me now, and bend my spirit downward ;
All *Venice* free, and every growing merit
Succeed to its just right ; Fools shall be pull'd

From wisdom's seat ; those baleful unclean birds,
 Those lazy owls, who (perch'd near fortune's top)
 Sit only watchful with their heavy wings
 To cuff down new fledg'd virtues, that would rise
 To nobler heights, and make the grove harmonious.

Jaff. What can I do?

Pier. Canst thou not kill a senator?

Jaff. Were there one wise or honest, I could kill him
 For herding with that nest of fools or knaves.
 By all my wrongs, thou talk'st as if revenge
 Were to be had ; and the brave story warms me.

Pier. Swear then !

Jaff. I do, by all those glittering stars,
 And yon great ruling planet of the night,
 By all good powers above, and ill below,
 By love and friendship, dearer than my life,
 No pow'r or death shall make me false to thee.

Pier. Here we embrace, and I'll unlock my heart.
 A council's held hard by, where the destruction
 Of this great empire's hatching : There I'll lead thee.
 But be a man, for thou art to mix with men
 Fit to disturb the peace of all the world,
 And rule it when 'tis wildest—

Jaff. I give thee thanks
 For this kind warning : Yes, I'll be a man ;
 And charge thee, *Pierre*, whene'er thou see'st my fears
 Betray me less, to rip this heart of mine
 Out of my breast, and shew it for a coward's.
 Come, let's be gone, for from this hour I chace
 All little thoughts, all tender human follies,
 Out of my bosom ; Vengeance shall have room ;
 Revenge !

Pier. And liberty !

Jaff. Revenge !

Pier. And liberty !

Jaff. Revenge ! Revenge—

[*Exeunt*]

The SCENE changes to Aquilina's House, the Greek Courtesan.

Enter Renault.

Ren. Why was my choice ambition, the worst ground
A wretch can build on? 'tis indeed, at distance,
A goodly prospect, tempting to the view;
The height delights us, and the mountain-top
Looks beautiful, because 'tis nigh to heav'n;
But we ne'er think how sandy's the foundation,
What storm will batter, and what tempest shake us.
Who's there?

Enter Spinosa.

Spin. Renault, good-morrow, for by this time
I think the scale of night has turn'd the balance,
And weighs up morning: Has the clock struck
twelve?

Ren. Yes; clocks will go as they are set: But man,
Irregular man's ne'er constant, never certain:
I've spent at least three precious hours of darkness
In waiting dull attendance; 'tis the curse
Of diligent virtue to be mixt, like mine,
With giddy tempers, souls but half resolv'd.

Spin. Hell seize that soul amongst us, it can frighten.

Ren. What's then the cause that I am here alone?
Why are we not together?

Enter Eliot.

O, Sir, welcome!
You are an *Englishman*: When treason's hatching,
One might have thought you'd not have been behind
hand.

In what whore's lap have you been lolling?
Give but an *Englishman* his whore and ease,

Beef,

Beef, and a sea-coal fire, he's yours for ever.

Eli. Frenchman, you are saucy.

Ren. How?

Enter Bedamar the Ambassador, Theodore, Bramveil, Durand, Brabe, Revillido, Mezzana, Ternon, Retrofi, Conspirators.

Bed. At difference, fie!

Is this a time for quarrels? Thieves and rogues
Fall out and brawl: Should men of your high calling,
Men separated by the choice of providence
From the gross heap of mankind, and set here
In this assembly as in one great jewel,
To adorn the bravest purpose it e'er smil'd on;
Should you, like boys, wrangle for trifles?

Ren. Boys!

Bed. Renault, thy hand.

*Ren. I thought I'd given my heart
Long since to every man that mingles here;
But grieve to find it trusted with such tempers,
That can't forgive my forward age its weakness.*

*Bed. Eliot, thou once had'st virtue; I have seen
Thy stubborn temper bend with god-like goodness,
Not half thus courted 'Tis thy nation's glory,
To hug the foe that offers brave alliance.
Once more embrace, my friends—we'll all take hands.
United thus, we are the mighty engine
Must twist this rooted empire from its basis.
Tatters it not already?*

Eli. Would 'twere tumbling.

*Bed. Nay, it shall down: This night we seal its
ruin.*

Enter Pierre.

Oh! *Pierre*, thou art welcome.

Come to my breast, for by its hopes thou look'st
Lovely dreadful, and the fate of *Venice*
Seems on thy sword already. Oh! my *Mars*!

The

The poets, that first feign'd a god of war,
Sure prophesy'd of thee.

Pier. Friends, was not *Brutus*,
(I mean that *Brutus*, who in open senate
Stabb'd the first *Cæsar* that usurp'd the world)
A gallant man?

Ren. Yes, and *Cataline* too;
Tho' story wrong his fame: For he conspir'd
To prop the reeling glory of his country.
His cause was good.

Bed. And our's as much above it,
As, *Renault*, thou'rt superior to *Cethegus*,
Or *Pierre*, to *Cassius*.

Pier. Then to what we aim at,
When do we start? or must we talk for ever?

Bed. No, *Pierre*, the deed's near birth: Fate seems
to have set

The business up, and given it to our care:
I hope there's not a heart or hand amongst us,
But is firm and ready.

All. All.

We'll die with *Bedamar*.

Bed. O men,
Matchless! as will your glory be hereafter:
The game is for a matchless prize, if won:
It lost, disgraceful ruin.

Pier. Ten thousand men are armed at your nod,
Commanded all by leaders fit to guide
A battle for the freedom of the world:
This wretched state has starv'd them in its service;
And, by your bounty quicken'd, they're resolv'd
To serve your glory, and revenge their own:
They've all their different quarters in this city,
Watch for the alarm, and grumble 'tis so tardy.

Bed. I doubt not, friend, but thy unwearied dili-
Has still kept waking, and it shall have ease; (gence
After this night: it is resolv'd we meet
No more, till *Venice* owns us for her lords.

Pier. How lovelily the *Adriatic* whore,
Dress'd in her flames, will shine! devouring flames!

Such

Such as shall burn her to the watry bottom,
And hiss in her foundations.

Bed. Now if any
Amongst us, that owns this glorious cause,
Have friends or interest he d wish to save,
Let it be told : the general doom is seal'd.
But I'd forego the hopes of a world's empire,
Rather than wound the bowels of my friend.

Pier. I must confess, you there have touch'd my
weakness,
I have a friend ; hear it ! such a friend !
My heart was ne'er shut to him. Nay, I tell you,
He knows the very business of this hour ;
But he rejoices in the cause, and loves it :
We've chang'd a vow to live and die together,
And he's at hand to ratify it here.

Ren. How ! all betray'd ?

Pier. No—I've dealt nobly with you,
I've brought my all into the public stock :
I'd but one friend, and him I'll share amongst you :
Receive and cherish him ; or if, when seen
And search'd, you find him worthless, as my tongue
Has lodg'd this secret in his faithful breast,
To ease your fears I wear a dagger here
Shall rip it out again, and give you rest.
Come forth, thou only good I e'r could boast of.

Enter Jaffier with a dagger.

Bed. His presence bears the shew of manly virtue.

Jaff. I know you'll wonder all, that, thus uncall'd,
I dare approach this place of fatal council ;
But I'm amongst you, and by heav'n it glads me,
To see so many virtues thus united,
To restore justice, and dethrone oppression.
Command this sword, if you would have it quiet,
Into this breast ; but, if you think it worthy
To cut the throats of reverend rogues in robes,
Send me into the curs'd assembled senate :
It shrinks not, tho' I meet a father there.

Would

Would you behold this city flaming? Here's
A hand shall bear a lighted torch at noon
To the arsenal, and set its gates on fire.

Ren. You talk this well, Sir.

Jaff. Nay——by heaven I'll do this.
Come, come, I read distrust in all your faces;
But I come ripe with wrongs, as you with councils;
I hate this senate, am a foe to *Venice*;
A friend to none but men resolv'd like me
To push on mischief. Oh! did you but know me,
I need not talk thus!

Bed. Pierre, I must embrace him,
My heart beats to this man, as if it knew him.

Ren. I never lov'd these huggers.

Jaff. Still I see your friends survey me
As I were dangerous——but I come arm'd
Against all doubts, and to your trust will give
A pledge worth more than all the world can pay for,
My *Belvidera*. Ho! my *Belvidera*!

Bed. What wonder next?

Jaff. Let me intreat you,
As I have henceforth hope to call you friends,
That all but the ambassador, this
Grave guide of councils, with my friend that owes
me,

Withdraw a while to spare a woman's blushes.

[*Exeunt all but Bed. Ren. Jaff. Pier.*]

Bed. Pierre, whither will this ceremony lead us?

Jaff. My *Belvidera*! *Belvidera*!

Enter Belvidera.

Bel. Who?

Who calls so loud at this late peaceful hour?
That voice was wont to come in gentle whispers,
And fill my ears with the soft breath of love:
Thou hourly image of my thoughts, where art thou?

Jaff. Indeed 'tis late.

Bel. Alas! where am I! whither is't you lead me?
Methinks I read distraction in your face.

You

You shake and tremble too! your blood runs cold!
Heav'n's guard my love, and bless his heart with patience.

Jaff. That I have patience, let our fate bear witness,

Who has ordain'd it so, that thou and I,
(Thou, the divinest good man e'er possess'd,
And I, the wretched'st of the race of man)
This very hour without one tear must part.

Bel. Part! must we part? Oh! am I then forsaken?
Why drag you from me? whither are you going?
My dear! my life! my love!

Jaff. Oh! friend!

Bel. Speak to me.

Jaff. Take her from my heart,
She'll gain such hold else, I shall ne'er get loose;
I charge thee take her, but with tenderest care
Relieve her troubles, and assuage her sorrows.

Ren. Rise madam, and command amongst your servants.

Jaff. To you, Sirs, and your honours, I bequeath her,

And with her this, when I prove unworthy——

[*Gives a dagger.*]

You know the rest——Then strike it to her heart;
And tell her, he who three whole happy years
Lay in her arms, and each kind night repeated
The passionate vows of still increasing love,
Sent that reward for all her truth and sufferings.

Bel. Nay, take my life, since he has sold it cheaply;
O! thou unkind one;
Ne'er meet more! have I deserv'd this from you?
Look on me, tell me; speak, thou dear deceiver.
Why am I separated from thy love?
If I am false, accuse me; but if true,
Don't, prithee don't, in poverty forsake me;
But pity the sad heart, that's torn with parting.
Yet hear me? yet recal me——

[*Ex. Ren. Bel. and Bel.*]

Jaff. Oh! my heart strings!

My

My friend, where art thou ?

Pier. Here, my honour's brother.

Jaff. Is *Belvidera* gone ?

Pier. *Renault* has led her

Back to her own apartment ; but, by heav'n,

Thou must not see her more, till our work's over.

Jaff. Not see her ?

Pier. Not for your life.

Jaff. O *Pierre*, were she but here,

How I would pull her down into my heart,

Gaze on her till my eye-strings crack'd with love ;

Then swelling, sighing, raging to be blest ;

Come like a panting turtle to her breast ;

On her soft bosom hovering, bill and play,

Confess the cause why last I fled away ;

Own 'twas a fault, but swear to give it o'er,

And never follow false ambition more. [Exeunt.

A C T III.

S C E N E *Continues.**Enter Belvidera.*

Bel. I'M sacrific'd ! I'm sold ! betray'd to shame !
 Inevitable ruin has inclos'd me !
 He that should guard my virtue, has betray'd it ;
 Left me ! undone me ! Oh that I could hate him !
 Where shall I go ? Oh whither, whither wander !

Enter Jaffier.

Jaff. Can *Belvidera* want a resting-place,
 When these poor arms are ready to receive her !
 There was a time——

Bel. Yes, yes, there was a time
 When *Belvidera's* tears, her cries, and sorrows,
 Were not despis'd ; when, if she chanc'd to sigh,
 Or look but sad ;——there was indeed a time,
 When *Jaffier* would have ta'en her in his arms,
 Eas'd her declining head upon his breast,
 And never left her till he found the cause.

Jaff. Oh ! *Porcia* ! *Porcia* ! What a foul was thine ?

Bel. That *Porcia* was a woman ; and when *Brutus*,
 Big with the fate of *Rome*, (heav'n guard thy safety !) *Conceal'd* from her the labours of his mind ;
 She let him see her blood was great as his ;
 Flow'd from a spring as noble, and a heart
 Fit to partake his troubles, as his love.
 Fetch, fetch that dagger back, the dreadful dower
 Thou gav'st last night in parting with me ; strike it
 Here to my heart, and, as the blood flows from it,
 Judge if it run not pure as that of *Caesar's* daughter.

Jaff. Oh ! *Belvidera* !

Bel.

Bel. Why was I last night deliver'd to a villain ?

Jaff. Ha ! a villain ?

Bel. Yes, to a villain ! Why at such an hour
Meets that assembly, all made up of wretches ?
Why, I in this hand, and in that a dagger,
Was I deliver'd with such dreadful ceremonies ?
" To you, Sirs, and to your honour I bequeath her,
" And with her this : Whene'er I prove unworthy—
" You know the rest—then strike it to her heart."
Oh ! what's that rest conceal'd from me ? must I
Be made the hostage of an hellish trust ?
For such I know I am ; that's all my value :—
But, by the love and loyalty I owe thee,
I'll free thee from the bondage of these slaves :—
Strait to the senate, tell 'em all I know,
All that I think, all that my fears inform me.

Jaff. Is this the Roman virtue ? this the blood
That boasts it purity with *Cato's* daughter !
Would she have e'er betray'd her *Brutus* ?

Bel. No:

For *Brutus* trusted her : Wert thou so kind,
What would not *Belvidera* suffer for thee ?

Jaff. I shall undo myself, and tell thee all.
Yet think a little, ere thou tempt me farther ;
Think I've a tale to tell will shake thy nature,
Melt all this boasted constancy thou talk'st of,
Into vile tears and despicable sorrows :
Then, if thou should'st betray me !

Bel. Shall I swear ?

Jaff. No, do not swear : I would not violate
Thy tender nature with so rude a bond :
But as thou hop'st to see me live my days,
And love thee long, lock this within thy breast :
I've bound myself by all the strictest sacraments,
Divine and human——

Bel. Speak !

Jaff. To kill thy father——

Bel. My father ! ——

Jaff. Nay, the throats of the whole senate
Shall bleed, my *Belvidera* : He, amongst us,

That spares his father, brother, or his friend,
Is damn'd.

Bel. Oh !

Jaff. Have a care, and shrink not even in thought;
For if thou dost ———

Bel. I know it, thou wilt kill me.

Do, strike thy sword into this bosom ; lay me
Dead on the earth, and then thou wilt be safe —
Murder my father ! — tho' his cruel nature
Has persecuted me to my undoing ;
Driven me to basest wants ; can I behold him,
With smiles of vengeance, butcher'd in his age ?
The sacred fountain of my life destroy'd ?
And can'st thou shed the blood that gave me being ?
Nay, be a traitor too, and sell thy country ?
Can thy great heart descend so vilely low,
Mix with hir'd slaves, bravos, and common flabbers,
Join with such a crew, and take a ruffian's wages,
To cut the throats of wretches as they sleep ?

Jaff. Thou wrong'st me, *Belvidera* ! I've engag'd
With men of souls, fit to reform the ills
Of all mankind : There's not a heart amongst them
But's stout as death, yet honest as the nature
Of man first made, ere fraud and vice were fashions.

Bel. What's he, to whose curs'd hands last night
thou gav'st me ?

Was that well done? — Oh ! I could tell a story,
Would rouse thy lion heart out of its den,
And make it rage with terrifying fury.

Jaff. Speak on, I charge thee.

Bel. Oh, my love ! if e'er

Thy *Belvidera's* peace deserv'd thy care,
Remove me from this place — Last night, last night !

Jaff. Distract me not : but give me all the truth.

Bel. No sooner wert thou gone, and I alone,
Left in the power of that old son of mischief ;
No sooner was I lain on my sad bed,
But that vile wretch approach'd me, loose, unbut-
ton'd,

Ready for violation : Then my heart
Throb'd with its fears. Oh ! how I wept and sigh'd
And

And shrunk and trembled ! wish'd in vain for him
That should protect me ! Thou, alas, wert gone.

Jaff. Patience, sweet heav'n, till I make vengeance
sure.

Bel. He drew the hideous dagger forth thou gav'st
him,

And with upbraiding smiles he said, Behold it,

This is the pledge of a false husband's love. —

And in my arms then press'd, and would have clasp'd
me ;

But with my cries I scar'd his coward heart,

Till he withdrew, and mutter'd vows to hell.

These are thy friends ! with these thy life, thy honour,

Thy love, all are stak'd, and all will go to ruin.

Jaff. No more ; I charge thee keep this secret close ;

Clear up thy sorrows, look as if thy wrongs

Were all forgot, and treat him like a friend,

As no complaint were made, No more, retire ;

Retire, my love, and doubt not of my honour

I'll heal its failings, and deserve thy love.

Bel. Oh ! should I part with thee, I fear thou wilt
In anger leave me, and return no more.

Jaff. Return no more ! I would not live without
thee

Another night to purchase the creation.

Bel. When shall we meet again ?

Jaff. Anon at twelve

I'll steal myself to thy expecting arms,

Come like a travell'd dove, and bring thee peace.

Bel. Indeed !

Jaff. By all our loves.

Bel. 'Tis hard to part :

But sure no falsehood ever look'd so fairly.

Farewel ; remember twelve.

[Exit.]

Jaff. Let heaven forget me,

When I remember not thy truth, thy love.

Enter Pierre.

Pier. Jaffier !

Jaff. Who calls ?

Pier. A friend; that could have wish'd
 T'have found thee otherwise employ'd—What, hunt
 A wife on the dull foil! sure a staunch husband
 Of all hounds is the dullest.—Wilt thou never,
 Never be wean'd from caudles and confections;
 What feminine tales hast thou been listn'ng to,
 Of unair'd shirts, catarrhs and tooth-ach, got
 By thin-soal'd shoes?—Damnation! that a fellow,
 Chosen to be a sharer in the destruction
 Of a whole people, should sneak thus in corners,
 To ease his fulsome lusts, and fool his mind.

Jaff. May not a man then trifle out an hour
 With a kind woman, and not wrong his calling!

Pier. Not in a cause like ours.

Jaff. Then, friend, our cause
 Is in a damn'd condition; for I'll tell thee,
 That canker-worm, call'd leachery, has touch'd it;
 'Tis tainted vilely: Would'st thou think it? *Renault*
 (That mortify'd old wither'd winter rogue)
 Loves simple fornication like a priest;
 I found him out for watering at my wife;
 He visited her last night, like a kind guardian:
 Faith, she has some temptation, that's the truth on't.

Pier. He durst not wrong his trust.

Jaff. 'Twas something late though,
 To take the freedom of a lady's chamber.

Pier. Was she in bed?

Jaff. Yes, faith! in virgins-sheets,
 White as her bosom, *Pierre*, dish'd neatly up,
 Might tempt a weaker appetite to taste.
 Oh! how the old fox stunk, I warrant thee,
 When the rank fit was on him.

Pier. Patience guide me!

He us'd no violence?

Jaff. No, no, out on't, violence!
 Play'd with her neck! brush'd her with his grey beard,
 Struggl'd and touz'd, tickl'd her till she squeak'd a
 little

May be, or so—but not a jot of violence—

Pier. Damn him.

Jaff.

Jaff. Ay, so say I : But hush, no more on't.
All hitherto is well, and I believe
Myself no monster yet :
Sure 'tis near the hour
We all should meet for our concluding orders :
Will the ambassador be here in person ?

Pier. No : he has sent commission to that villain
Renault

To give the executing charge :
I'd have thee be a man, if possible,
And keep thy temper - for a brave revenge
Ne'er comes too late.

Jaff. Fear not, I am as cool as patience.

Pier. He's yonder, coming this way thro' the hall ;
His thoughts seem full.

Jaff. Prithee retire, and leave me
With him alone : I'll put him to some trial ;
See how his rotten part will bear the touching.

Pier. Be careful then.

[*Exit.*]

Jaff. Nay, never doubt, but trust me.——
What, be a devil ! take a damning oath
For shedding native blood !——Can there be a sin
In merciful repentance ?——Oh ! this villain !

Enter Renault.

Ren. Perverse and peevish : What a slave is man,
To let his itching flesh thus get the better of him ?
Dispatch the tool her husband—that were well,
Who's there ?

Jaff. A man.

Ren. My friend, my near ally,
The hostage of your faith, my beauteous charge, is
- very well.

Jaff. Sir, are you sure of that ?
Stands she in perfect health ? beats her pulse even ?
Neither too hot nor cold ?

Ren. What means that question ?

Jaff. Oh ! women have fantastick constitutions,
Inconstant as their wishes.

Waa

Was it not boldly done
Even at first sight to trust the thing I lov'd
(A tempting treasure too) with youth so fierce
And vigorous as thine? But thou art honest.

Ren. Who dare accuse me?

Jaff. Curs'd be he that doubts
Thy virtue; I have try'd it, and declare,
Were I to chuse a guardian of my honour,
I'd put it in thy keeping: For I know thee.

Ren. Know me!

Jaff. Ay, know thee: There's no falshood in thee,
Thou look'st just as thou art: let us embrace.
Now would'st thou cut my throat, or I cut thine.

Ren. You dare not do't.

Jaff. You lye, Sir.

Ren. How!

Jaff. No more.

'Tis a base world, and must reform;—that's all.

Enter Spinosa, Theodore, Eliot, Revellido, Durand,
Bramveil, and the rest of the Conspirators.

Ren. Spinosa, Theodore.

Spin. The same.

Ren. You are welcome.

Spin. you are trembling, Sir.

Ren. 'Tis a cold night, indeed; I am aged,
Full of decay, and natural infirmities;

[*Pier. re-enters.*

We shall be warm, my friends, I hope, to morrow.

Pier. 'Twas not well done; thou should'st have
stroak'd him,
And not have gaul'd him.

Jaff. Damn him, let him chew on't——
Heav'n! Where am I? beset with cursed fiends
That wait to damn me! What a devil's man.

When he forgets his nature——Hush, my heart.

Ren. My friends, 'tis late: Are we assembled?

Omnes. All, all.

Ren. Oh! you're men I find,

Fit to behold your fate, and meet her summons :
To morrow's rising sun must see you all
Deck'd in your honours. — Are the soldiers ready ?

Pier. All, all.

Ren. You, *Durand*, with your thousand must possess
St. Mark's; you, captain, know your charge already:
'Tis to secure the ducal palace : You,
Brabe, with a hundred more, must gain the *Secque* :
With the like number, *Bramwell*, to the *Procurale*.
Be all this done with the least tumult possible,
'Till in each place you post sufficient guards :
Then sheath your swords in every breast you meet.

Jaff. Oh ! reverend cruelty ! damn'd bloody villain !

Ren. During this execution, *Durand*, you
Must in the midst keep your battalia fast ;
And, *Theodore*, be sure to plant the cannon
That may command the streets.
This done, we'll give the general alarm,
Apply petards, and force the ar'senal gates ;
Then fire the city round in several places,
Or with our cannon (if it dare resist)
Batter't to ruin. But above all I charge you,
Shed blood enough, spare neither sex nor age,
Name nor condition ; if there lives a senator
After-to-morrow, though the dullest rogue
That e'er said nothing, we have lost our ends :
If possible, let's kill the very name
Of senators, and bury it in blood.

Jaff. Merciless, horrid slave ! — Ay, blood enough !
Shed blood enough, old *Renault* ! how thou charm'st
me !

Ren. But one thing more, and then farewell, till fate
Join us again, or separate us ever :

But let us all remember,

We wear no common cause upon our sword :
Let each man think, that on his single virtue
Depends the good and fame of all the rest ;
Eternal honour, or perpetual infamy
You droop, Sir.

Jaff.

Jaff. No : with most profound attention
I've heard it all, and wonder at thy virtue.

Ren. Let's consider;
That we destroy oppression, avarice,
A people nurs'd up equally with vices,
And loathsome lust, which nature most abhors,
And such as without shame she cannot suffer.

Jaff. Oh! *Belvidera*, take me to thy arms,
And shew me where's my peace, for I have lost it.

[*Exit.*

Ren. Without the least remorse then let's resolve
With fire and sword t'exterminate these tyrants ;
Under whose weight this wretched country labours :
The means are only in our hands to crown them.

Pier. And may those powers above, that are propitious
To gallant minds, record this cause and bless it.

Ren. Thus happy, thus secure of all we wish for,
Should there, my friends, be found amongst us one
False to this glorious enterprize, what fate,
What vengeance were enough for such a villain ?

Eli. Death here without repentance, hell hereafter.

Ren. Let that be my lot, if, as here I stand,
Lifted by fate among her darling sons,
Tho' I had one only brother, dear by all
The strictest ties of nature ;
Could I have such a friend
Join'd in this cause, and had but ground to fear
He meant foul play ; may this right hand drop from
me.

If I'd not hazard all my future peace,
And stab him to the heart before you. Who ?
Who would do less ? would'st thou not, *Pierre*, the
same ?

Pier. You've singled me, Sir, out for this hard
question,

As if 'twere started only for my sake ?
Am I the thing you fear ? Here, here's my bosom,
Search it with all your swords : Am I a traitor ?

Ren. No: But I fear your late commended friend
Is little less : Come, Sirs, 'tis now no time

To

To trifle with our safety. Where's this *Jaffier*?

Spin. He left the room just now in strange disorder.

Ren. Nay, there is danger in him: I observ'd him;
During the time I took for explanation,
His looks grew full of sadness and surprize,
All which betray'd a wavering spirit in him.
What's requisite for safety must be done
With speedy execution; he remains
Yet in our power: I for my own part wear
A dagger——

Pier. Well.

Ren. And I could wish it——

Pier. Where?

Ren. Bury'd in his heart.

Pier. Away; we're yet all friends;
No more of this, 'twill breed ill blood amongst us.

Spin. Let us all draw our swords, and search the
house;

Pull him from the dark hole where he sits brooding
O'er his cold fears, and each man kill his share of him.

Pier. Who talks of killing? who's he'll shed the
blood,

That's dear to me? Is't you? or you, Sir?

What, not one speak? How you stand gaping all
On your grave oracle, your wooden god there!

Yet not a word! Then, Sir, I'll tell y' a secret;
Suspicion's but at best a coward's virtue. [*To Ren.*

Ren. A coward!—— [*Handles his sword.*

Pier. Put up thy sword, old man,
Thy hand shakes at it. Come, let's heal this breach;
I am too hot:——We yet may all live friends.

Spin. Till we are safe, our friendship cannot be so.

Pier. Again! Who's that?

Spin. 'Twas I.

Theod. And I.

Rev. And I.

Eli. And all.

Ren. Who are on my side?

Spin. Every honest sword.

Let's die like men, and not be sold like slaves.

Pier.

Pier. One such word more, by heav'n I'll to the senate,

And hang ye all, like dogs, in clusters.
Why peep your coward swords half out their shells?
Why do you not all brandish them like mine?
You fear to die, and yet dare talk of killing.

Ren. Go to the senate, and betray us! haste,
Secure thy wretched life; we fear to die
Less than thou dar'st be honest.

Pier. That's a rank falsehood;
Fear'st not thou death? Fie, there's a knavish itch
In that salt blood, an utter foe to smarting.
Had *Jaffier's* wife prov'd kind, he'd still been true.
Faugh——how that stinks?

Thou die! thou kill my friend, or thou, or thou,
Away; disperse all to your several charges,
And meet to-morrow where your honour calls you;
I'll bring that man, whose blood you so much thirst for,
And you shall see him venture for you fairly——
Hence, hence, I say. [*Exit Renault angrily.*]

Spin. I fear we have been to blame,
And done too much.
Forgive us, gallant friend.

Pier. Nay, now you've found
The way to melt, and cast me as you will.
Oh! What a dangerous precipice have we 'scap'd!
How near a fall was all we'd long been building!
What an eternal blot had stain'd our glories,
If one, the bravest and the best of men,
Had fall'n a sacrifice to rash suspicion,
Butcher'd by those whose cause he came to cherish!
Come but to-morrow, all your doubts shall end,
And to your loves me better recommend,
That I've preserv'd your fame, and sav'd my friend
[*Exeunt*]

ACT IV. SCENE I.

The Rialto.

Enter Jaffier and Belvidera.

Jaff. **W**Here dost thou lead me? Ev'ry step I move,
Methinks I tread upon some mangled limb
Of a rack'd friend: O my charming ruin!
Where are we wandering?

Bel. To eternal honour.

To do a deed shall chronicle thy name,
Among the glorious legends of those few,
That have sav'd sinking nations: Thy renown
Shall be the future song of all the virgins,
Who by thy piety have been preserv'd
From horrid violation. Every street
Shall be adorn'd with statues to thy honour,
And at thy feet this great inscription written;
Remember him that prop'd the fall of *Venice*.

Jaff. Rather, remember him, who, after all
The sacred bonds of oaths, and holier friendship,
In fond compassion to a woman's tears,
Forgot his manhood, virtue, truth, and honour,
To sacrifice the bosom that reliev'd him.——
Why wilt thou damn me?

Bel. Oh, inconstant man!
How will you promise! How will you deceive!
Do, return back, and replace me in my bondage,
Tell all thy friends how dang'rously thou lov'st me
And let thy dagger do its bloody office.——
Or, if thou think'st it nobler, let me live,
Till I'm a victim to the hateful lust
Of that infernal devil.—Last night my love!

Jaff. Name it not again;
I shews a beastly image to my fancy,

D

Will

Will wake me into madness. Oh! the villain!
That durst approach such purity as thine
On terms so vile: Destruction, swift destruction,
Fall on my coward head,
If I forgive him.

Bel. Delay no longer then, but to the senate,
And tell the dismal'st story ever utter'd:
Tell 'em what bloodshed, rapines, desolations,
Have been prepar'd: How near's the fatal hour.
Save thy poor country, save the reverend blood
Of all its nobles, which to-morrow's dawn
Must else see shed.

Jaff. Oh!

Bel. Think what then may prove
My lot; the ravisher may then come false,
And 'midst the terror of the public ruin
Do a damn'd deed; perhaps may lay a train
To catch thy life: Then where will be revenge,
The dear revenge that's due to such a wrong?

Jaff. By all heav'n's powers, prophetick truth dwells
in thee,

For every word thou speak'st strikes thro' my heart,
Like a new light, and shews it how't has wander'd.

• Come, lead me forward now like a tame lamb
'T'o sacrifice. Thus in his fatal garlands
Deck'd fine and pleas'd, the wanton skips and plays,
'Trots by th' enticing flatter'ing priestess' side,
And, much transported with his little pride,
Forgets his dear companions of the plain;
'Till, by her bound, he's on the altar lain,
Yet then too, hardly bleats, such pleasure's in the
pain.

Enter Officer, and Guards.

Off. Stand, who goes there?

Bel. Friends.

Off. But what friends are you?

Bel. Friends to the senate, and the state of Venice.

Off. My orders are to seize on all I find
At this late hour, and bring 'em to the council,

Who

Who are now sitting.

Jaff. Sir, you shall be obey'd.

Now the lot's cast, and fate do what thou wilt.

[*Exeunt guarded.*]

SCENE II.

The Senate House.

Where appear sitting the Duke of Venice, Priuli, and other Senators.

Duke. Antony, Priuli, senators of Venice,
Speak, why are we assembled here this night;
What have you to inform us of, concerns
The state of Venice' honour, or its safety?

Pri. Could words express the story I've to tell you,
Fathers, these tears were useless, these sad tears
That fall from my old eyes; but there is cause
We all should weep, tear off these purple robes,
And wrap ourselves in sackcloth, sitting down
On the sad earth, and cry aloud to heav'n:
Heav'n knows if yet there be an hour to come,
Ere Venice be no more.

All Sen. How!

Pri. Nay, we stand
Upon the very brink of gaping ruin.
Within this city's form'd a dark conspiracy
To massacre us all, our wives and children,
Kindred and friends, our palaces and temples
To lay in ashes: Nay the hour too fix'd;
The swords, for ought I know, drawn e'en this mo-
ment,
And the wild waste begun. — From unknown hands
I had this warning: — But if we are men,
Let's not be tamely butcher'd, but do something
That may inform the world, in after-ages,
Our virtue was not ruin'd, tho' we were.

A Noise without.

Off. Room, room, make room for some prisoners—

Enter Officer and Guards.

Duke. Speak there. What disturbance?

Off. Two prisoners I have seiz'd in the streets,
Who say, they come to inform this reverend senate
About the present danger.

Enter Jaffier, guarded.

All. Give 'em entrance——well, who are you?

Jaff. A villain.

Would every man, that hears me,
Would deal so honestly and own his title!

Duke. 'Tis rumour'd that a plot has been contriv'd
Against this state; that you have a share in't too.
If you are a villain, to redeem your honour,
Unfold the truth, and be restor'd with mercy.

Jaff. Think not, that I to save my life came hither;
I know its value better; but in pity
To all those wretches; whose unhappy dooms
Are fix'd and seal'd.—You see me here before you,
The sworn and covenanted foe of *Venice*:
But use me as my dealings may deserve;
And I may prove a friend.

Duke. The slave capitulates;
Give him the tortures.

Jaff. Give him the tortures! Name but such a thing
Again, by heav'n I'll shut these lips for ever.——
Not all your racks, your engines, or your wheels,
Shall force a groan away, that you may guess at.

Duke. Name your conditions.

Jaff. For myself full pardon,
Besides the lives of two and twenty friends.
Swear this,

And I'll unfold the secret of your danger.

Duke. Propose the oath.

Jaff. By all the hopes
You have of peace and happiness hereafter,
Swear,

All

All. We all swear.

Jaff. And, as ye keep the oath,
May you and your posterity be blest'd,
Or curs'd for ever.

All. Else be curs'd for ever.

Jaff. Then here's the list, and with't the full disclose
Of all that threatens you.— [*Delivers a Paper.*]

Now, fate, thou hast caught me.

Duke. Give order, that all diligent search be made;
To seize these men; their characters are public.

The paper intimates their rendezvous

To be at the house of the fam'd *Grecian* courtesan,
Call'd *Aquilina*; see the place secur'd.—

You, *Jaffier*, must with patience bear till morning
To be our prisoner.

Jaff. Sir, if possible,
Lead me where my own thoughts themselves may lose
me;

Where I may doze out what I've left of life,
Forget myself, and this day's guilt and falsehood.—
Cruel remembrance, how shall I appease thee.—

[*Exit guarded. Noise without.*]

Off. More traytors; room, room, make room there.

Duke. How's this, guards?

Where are our guards? Shut up the gates, the trea-
son's.

Enter Officers.

Already at our doors.

Off. My lords, more traytors
Seiz'd in the very act of consultation;
Furnish'd with arms and instruments of mischief.
Bring in the prisoners.

*Enter Pierre, Renault, Theodore, Eliot, Revellido,
and other Conspirators, in fetters.*

Pier. You, my lords and fathers
(As you are pleas'd to call yourselves) of *Venice*
If you sit here to guide the course of justice,

Why these disgraceful chains upon the limbs
That have so often labour'd in your service?
Are these the wreaths of triumph ye bestow
On those, that bring you conquests home, and honours?

Duke. Go on, you shall be heard, Sir.

Pier. Are these the trophies I've deserv'd for fighting
Your battles with confederated powers?
When winds and seas conspir'd to overthrow you;
And brought the fleets of *Spain* to your own harbours;
When you, great duke, shrunk trembling in your palace,

And saw your wife, the *Adriatick*, plough'd,
Like a lewd whore, by bolder prow than yours;
Stepp'd not I forth, and taught your loose *Venetians*
The task of honour, and the way of greatness?

Rais'd you from your capitulating fears
To stipulate the terms of su'd-for peace?
And this my recompence! If I'm a traitor,
Produce my charge; or shew the wretch that's base enough,

And brave enough, to tell me I'm a traitor.

Duke. Know you one *Jaffier*? [*Althe Consp. murmur.*]

Pier. Yes, and know his virtue;
His justice, truth, his general worth, and sufferings
From a hard father, taught me first to love him.

Duke. See him brought forth.

Enter Jaffier, guarded.

Pier. My friend too bound! Nay then
Our fate has conquer'd us, and we must fall —
Why droops the man whose welfare's so much mine?
They're but one thing?—These reverend tyrants,

Jaffier.

Call us traitors: Art thou one, my brother?

Jaff. To thee I am the falsest, veriest slave,
That e'er betray'd a generous, trusting friend,
And gave up honour to be sure of ruin:
All our fair hopes, which morning was to have crown'd
Has,

Has this curs'd tongue o'erthrown.

Pier. So, then all's over:

Venice has lost her freedom, I my life,
No more.

Duke Say; will you make confession
Of your vile deeds, and trust the senate's mercy?

Pier. Curs'd be your senate: Curs'd your constitution;

The curse of growing factions and divisions
Still vex your councils, shake your public safety,
And make the robes of government you wear
Hateful to you, as these base chains to me.

Duke. Pardon, or death!

Pier. Death! honourable death!

Ren. Death's the best thing we ask, or you can give.

All Conf. No shameful bonds, but honourable death.

Duke. Break up the council: Captain, guard your prisoners.

Jaffier, you're free, but these must wait for judgment
[*Ex. all the Senators.*]

Pier. Come, where's my dungeon? Lead me to
my straw:

It will not be the first time I have lodg'd hard
To do the senate service.

Jaff. Hold one moment.

Pier. Who's he disputes the judgment of the senate?
Presumptuous rebel—on— [Strikes *Jaffier*.]

Jaff. By heav'n, you stir not,
I must be heard, I must have leave to speak:—
Thou hast disgrac'd me, *Pierre*, by a vile blow:
Had not a dagger done thee nobler justice?
But use me as thou wilt, thou can'st not wrong me;
But, as there dwells a godlike nature in thee,
Listen with mildness to my supplications.

Pier. What whining monk art thou? what holy
cheat,
That would'st inroach upon my credulous ears,
And can'st thus vilely? hence! know thee not.

Jaff. Not know me, *Pierre*!

Pier. No, know thee not: what art thou?

Jaff.

Jaff. Jaffier, thy friend, thy once lov'd, valu'd friend!

Tho' now deserv'dly scorn'd, and us'd most hardly.

Pier. Thou Jaffier! thou my once lov'd, valu'd friend!

By heav'n's thou ly'st; the man so call'd, my friend,
Was generous, honest, faithful, just, and valiant,
Noble in mind, and in his person lovely,
Dear to my eyes, and tender to my heart.

But thou! a wretched, base, false, worthless coward,
Poor even in soul, and loathsome in thy aspect:

All eyes must shun thee, and all hearts detest thee.

Prithee avoid, nor longer cling thus round me,

Like something baneful, that my nature's chill'd at.

Jaff. I have not wrong'd thee, by these tears I have not?

Pier. Hast thou not wrong'd me? dar'st thou call thyself

That once lov'd, valu'd friend of mine,

And swear thou hast not wrong'd me? Whence these chains?

Whence the vile death, which I may meet this moment?

Whence this dishonour, but from thee, thou false one?

Jaff. All's true; yet grant one thing, and I've done asking.

Pier. What's that?

Jaff. To take thy life on such conditions
The council have propos'd: Thou and thy friends
May yet live long, and to be better treated.

Pier. Life! ask my life! confess! record myself
A villain! for the privilege to breathe,
And carry up and down this cursed city,
A discontented and repining spirit,
Burdenfome to itself, a few years longer;
To lose it, may be, at last, in a lewd quarrel
For some new friends, treacherous and false as thou art!

No, this vile world and I have long been jangling,
And cannot part on better terms than now,

When

When only men like thee are fit to live in't.

Jaff. By all that's just——

Pier. Swear by some other powers,
For thou hast broke that sacred oath too lately.

Jaff. Then, by that hell I merit, I'll not leave thee.

Pier. Not leave me !

Jaff. No ; thou shall not force me from thee ;
Tread on me, buffet me, heap wrongs on wrongs
On my poor head ; I'll bear it all with patience :
Lie at thy feet and kiss 'em, tho' they spurn me,
Till wounded by my sufferings thou relent.
And raise me to thy arms with dear forgiveness.

Pier. Art thou not——

Jaff. What ?

Pier. A traitor ?

Jaff. Yes.

Pier. A villain ?

Jaff. Granted.

Pier. A coward, a most scandalous coward,
Spiritless, void of honour, one who has sold
Thy everlasting fame for shameless life ?

Jaff. All, all, and more, much more : My faults
are numberless.

Pier. And would'st thou have me live on terms
like thine ?

Base as thou'rt false——

Jaff. No ; 'tis to me that's granted :
The safety of thy life was all I aim'd at,
In recompence for faith and trust so broken.

Pier. I scorn it more, because preserv'd by thee ;
And, as when first my foolish heart took pity
On thy misfortunes, sought thee in thy miseries,
Reliev'd thy wants, and rais'd thee from thy state
Of wretchedness, in which thy fate had plung'd thee,
To rank thee in my list of noble friends ;
All I receiv'd, in surety for thy truth,
Were unregarded oaths, and this, this dagger,
Given with a worthless pledge thou since hast stol'n.
So I restore it back to thee again ;
Swearing by all those powers which thou hast violated,
Neyer

Never, from this curs'd hour, to hold communion,
Friendship, or interest with thee, tho' our years
Were to exceed those limited the world.

Take it—farewel—for now I owe thee nothing.

Jaff. Say thou wilt live then.

Pier. For my life, dispose it

Just as thou wilt, because 'tis what I'm tir'd with.

Jaff. Oh *Pierre*!

Pier. No more.

Jaff. My eyes won't lose the sight of thee,
But languish after thine, and ake with gazing.

Pier. Leave me—Nay, then thus, thus I throw thee
from me;

And curses, great as is thy falshood, catch thee [*Exit.*

Jaff. Amen.

He's gone, my father, friend, preserver,

And here's the portion he has left me,

[*Holds the dagger up.*

This dagger: Well remember'd, with this dagger

I gave a solemn vow of dire importance;

Parted with this and *Belvidera* together.——

Have a care, mem'ry drive that thought no farther;

No, I'll esteem it as a friend's last legacy,

Treasure it up within this wretched bosom,

Where it may grow acquainted with my heart,

That, when they meet, they start not from each other.

So now for thinking:—A blow, call'd traitor, villain,

Coward, dishonourable coward, fough!——

Down, busy devil.

Enter Belvidera.

Bel. Whither shall I fly?

Where hide me and my miseries together?——

Where's now the *Roman* constancy I boasted?

Sunk into trembling fears and desperation.

Not daring to look up to that dear face

Which us'd to smile, even on my faults, but, down

Bending these miserable eyes to earth,

Must move in penance, and implore much mercy.

Jaff.

Jaff. Oh! *Belvidera*! I'm the wretched'st creature
E'er crawl'd on earth.

Bel. Alas! I know thy sorrows are most mighty;
Thou'ast lost ———

Jaff. Oh! I've lost what can't be counted.
My friend too, *Belvidera*, that dear friend,
Who, next to thee, was all my health rejoic'd in;
Has us'd me like a slave, shamefully us'd me:—
'Twould break thy pitying heart to hear the story.

Bel. What has he done?

Jaff. Before we parted,
Ere yet his guards had led him to his prison,
As at his feet I kneel'd, and su'd for mercy;
He struck me *Belvidera*;—by heav'n he struck me!
Buffetted, call'd me traytor, villain, coward.—
Am I a coward? Am I a villain? Tell me:
Thou'rt the best judge, and made'st me, if I am so.—
Damnation! Coward?

Bel. Oh! forgive him, *Jaffier*;
And, if his sufferings wound thy heart already,
What will they do to-morrow?

Jaff. Hah!

Bel. To-morrow,
When thou shalt see him stretch'd, in all the agonies
Of a tormenting and a shameful death;
His bleeding bowels, and his broken limbs,
Insulted o'er by a vile butchering villain.
What will thy heart do then! Oh! sure 'twill stream
Like my eyes now.

Jaff. What means thy dreadful story?
Death, and to-morrow? broken limbs and bowels?

Bel. The faithless senators, 'tis they've decreed it.
They say, according to our friends' request,
They shall have death, and no ignoble bondage:
Declare their promis'd mercy all as forfeited:
False to their oaths, and deaf to intercession;
Warrants are pass'd for public death to-morrow.

Jaff. Death! doom'd to die! condemn'd unheard!
unpleaded!

Bel. Nay, cruel! 'st racks and torments are preparing
To

To force confession from their dying pangs. ———
 Oh ! do not look so terribly upon me !
 How your lips shake, and all your face disorder'd !
 What means my love ?

Jaff. Leave me, I charge thee leave me—Strong
 temptations
 Wake in my heart.

Bel. For what ?

Jaff. No more, but leave me.

Bel. Why ?

Jaff. Oh ! by heav'n I love thee with that fondness,
 I wou'd not have thee stay a moment longer,
 Near these curs'd hands: Are they not cold upon thee?
*[Pulls the dagger half out of his bosom,
 and puts it back again.]*

Bel. No, everlasting comfort's in thy arms,
 To lean thus on thy breast is softer ease,
 Than downy pillows deck'd with leaves of roses.

Jaff. Alas ! thou think'st not of the thorns 'tis fill'd
 with :

Fly, ere they gaul thee : There's a lurking serpent
 Ready to leap, and sting thee to the heart :
 Art thou not terrifi'd ?

Bel. No.

Jaff. Call to mind (me.
 What thou hast done, and whither thou hast brought

Bel. Hah ! (mischief ?

Jaff. Where's my friend ? my friend, thou smiling
 Nay, shrink not, now 'tis too late ; for dire revenge
 Is up, and raging for my friend. He groans !
 Hark how he groans ! his screams are in my ears !
 See, see, they've fix'd him on the wheel,
 And now they tear him—Murder ! perjur'd senate !
 Murder—oh !—hark thee, traitress thou hast done
 this ;

Thanks to thy tears, and false persuading love.
 How her eyes speak ! O thou bewitching creature !
[Fumbling for his dagger.]

Madness can't hurt thee : Come, thou little trembler,
 Creep even into my heart, and there lie safe ;
 'Tis thy own citadel—hah—yet stand off,

Heaven

Heav'n must have justice.
I'll wink, and then 'tis done——

Bel. What means the lord
Of me, my life and love? What's in thy bosom,
Thou grasp'st at so?

[Draws the dagger, offers to stab her.]

Ah! do not kill me, *Jaffier*:
Pity these panting breasts and trembling limbs,
And plunge me not into eternal darkness.

Jaff. Know, *Belvidera*, when we parted last,
I gave this dagger with thee, as in trust
To be thy portion, if I e'er prov'd false.
On such condition was my truth believ'd:
But now 'tis forfeited, and must be paid for.

[Offers to stab her again.]

Bel. Oh! Mercy!

[Kneeling.]

Jaff. Nay, no struggling:

Bel. Now then kill me.

[Leaps upon his neck, and kisses him.]

While thus I cling about thy cruel neck,
Kiss thy revengeful lips and die in joys
Greater than any I can guess hereafter.

Jaff. I am, I am a coward.——
'Tis but one blow! Yet, by immortal love,
I cannot longer bear a thought to harm thee.

[He throws away the dagger, and embraces her.]

The seal of providence is sure upon thee;
By all the power that's given thee o'er my soul,
By thy resistless tears and conquering smiles,
Fly to thy cruel father, save my friend,
Or all our future quiet's lost for ever,
Fall at his feet, cling round his reverend knees,
Melt his hard heart, and wake dead nature in him;
Nor, till thy prayers are granted, set him free,
But conquer him as thou hast conquer'd me. *[Exit.]*

ACT V. SCENE I.

*A Room in Priuli's House.**Enter Priuli solus.*

Pri. **W**HY, cruel heav'n, have my unhappy days
 Been lengthen'd to this sad one? Oh!
 dishonour
 And deathless infamy is fall'n upon me. —
 Was it my fault? Am I a traitor? No,
 But then, my only child, my daughter wedded;
 There my best blood runs foul, and a disease
 Incurable has seiz'd upon my memory,
 To make it rot and stink to after-ages.

Enter Belvidera in a long mourning veil.

Bel. He's there, my father, my inhuman father,
 That for three years has left an only child
 Expos'd to all the outrages of fate,
 And cruel ruin! — Oh! —

Pri. What child of sorrow
 Art thou, that com'st wrapt up in weeds of sadness,
 And mov'st as if thy steps were towards a grave?

Bel. A wretch, who from the very top of happiness

Am fallen into the lowest depths of misery,
 And want your pitying hand to raise me up again.

Pri. What would'st thou beg for?

Bel. Pity and forgiveness. [*Throws up her veil.*
 By the kind and tender names of child and father,
 Hear my complaints, and take me to your love.

Pri. My daughter! don't talk thus.

Bel.

Bel. Yes, I must; and you must hear too,
I have a husband.

Pri. Damn him.

Bel. Oh! do not curse him;
He would not speak so hard a word towards you
On any terms, howe'er he dealt with me.

Pri. Ha! what means my child?

Bel. Oh! my husband, my dear husband,
Carries a dagger in his once kind bosom,
To pierce the heart of your poor *Belvidera*.

Pri. Kill thee!

Bel. Yes, kill me. When he pass'd his faith
And covenant against your state and senate,
He gave me up as hostage for his truth:
With me a dagger, and a dire commission,
Whene'er he fail'd to plunge it thro' this bosom.
I learnt the danger, chose the hour of love
To attempt his heart, and bring it back to honour.
Great love prevail'd, and blest'd me with success;
He came, confess'd, betray'd his dearest friends,
For promis'd mercy. Now they're doom'd to suffer.
Gall'd with remembrance of what then was sworn,
If they are lost, he vows to appease the gods
With this poor life, and make my blood th' atone-
ment.

Pri. Heav'n's!

Bel. If I was ever then your care, now hear me;
Fly to the senate, save the promis'd lives
Of his dear friends, ere mine be made the sacrifice.

Pri. Oh! my heart's comfort!

Bel. Will you not, my father? —
Weep not, but answer me.

Pri. By heav'n I will.

Not one of 'em but shall be immortal. —
Caust thou forgive me all my follies past?
I'll henceforth be indeed a father; never,
Never more thus expose, but cherish thee,
Dear as the vital warmth that feeds my life,
Dear as the eyes that weep in fondness o'er thee:
Peace to thy heart: Farewel.

Bel. Go, and remember
Tis *Belvidera's* life her father pleads for.
[*Exeunt severally.*]

SCENE II.

A Street

Enter Jaffier.

Pass. Final destruction seize on all the world!—
Bend down, ye heav'ns, and, shutting round this
earth,
Crush the vile globe into its first confusion!

Enter Belvidera.

Bel. My life —

[Meeting him.

Jaff. My plague—

[Turning from her.

Bel. Nay, then I see my ruin :
If I must die !

Jaff. Nay *Belvidera*, do not fear my cruelty,
Nor let the thoughts of death perplex thy fancy ;
But answer me to what I shall demand,
With a firm temper and unshaken spirit.

Bel. I will, when I've done weeping——

Jaff. Fie, no more on't —

How long is't since that miserable day
We wedded first?

Bel. Oh ! oh !

Jaff. Nay, keep in thy tears,
Lest they unman me too.

Bel. Heav'n knows I cannot ;
The words you utter sound so very sadly,
The streams will follow——

Taff. Come I'll kiss 'em dry then.

Bel. But was't a miserable day?

Jaff. A curs'd one.

Beñ. I thought it otherwise; and yo've oft sworn,
You blest'd it.

Faff.

Jaff. 'Twas a rash oath.

Bel. Then why am I not curs'd too?

Jaff. No, *Belvidera*, by th' eternal truth,
I doat with too much fondness.

Man ne'er was bless'd,

Since the first pair met, as I have been.

Bel. Then sure you will not curse me?

Jaff. No, I'll bless thee.

I came on purpose, *Belvidera*, to bless thee.

'Tis now, I think, three years, we've liv'd together.

Bel. And may no fatal minute ever part us,
Till reverend grown for age and love, we go
Down to one grave, as our last bed together;
There sleep in peace, till an eternal morning.

Jaff. Did I not say I came to bless thee?

Bel. Yes.

Jaff. Then hear me, bounteous heav'n;
Pour down your blessings on this beauteous head,
Where everlasting sweets are always springing,
With a continual giving hand: Let peace,
Honour, and safety, always hover round her;
Feed her with plenty, let her eyes ne'er see
A sight of sorrow, nor her heart know mourning:
Crown all her days with joy, her nights with rest
Harmless as her own thoughts, and prop her virtue,
To bear the loss of one that too much lov'd;
And comfort her with patience in our parting.

Bel. How, parting, parting!

Jaff. Yes, for ever parting!

I have sworn, *Belvidera*, by yon heav'n,
That best can tell how much I lose, to leave thee.—
We part this hour for ever.

Bel. Oh! call back

Your cruel blessing; stay with me and curse me!—
Oh! turn and hear me!

Jaff. Now hold, heart, or never.

Bel. By all the tender days we've liv'd together,
Pity my sad condition; speak, but speak.

Jaff. Oh! oh!

Bel. By these arms that now cling round thy neck,

By this dear kiss, and by ten thousand more,
By these poor streaming eyes——

Jaff. Murder! unhold me:

By th' immortal destiny that doom'd me

[*Draws his dagger.*]

To this curs'd minute, I'll not live one longer;
Resolve to let me go, or see me fall——

Bel. Hold, Sir, be patient.

Jaff. Hark, the dismal bell [*Passing-bell tolls.*]
Tolls out for death! I must attend its call too;
For my poor friend, my dying *Pierre*, expects me:
He sent a message to require I'd see him
Before he dy'd, and take his last forgiveness.——
Farewell, for ever.

Bel. Leave thy dagger with me.

Bequeath me something—Not one kiss at parting;
Oh! my poor heart, when wilt thou break?

[*Going out, looks back at him.*]

Jaff. Yet stay:

We have a child, as yet a tender infant;
Be a kind mother to him when I'm gone,
Breed him in virtue, and the paths of honour;
But never let him know his father's story.
Now—— nearer yet—— [*Approaching each other.*]
Oh! that my arms were riveted
Thus round thee ever! but my friend! my oath!
This, and no more. [*Kisses her.*]

Bel. Another sure, another,
For that little poor one you've ta'en such care of,
I'll give't him truly.

J. ff. So now farewell.

Bel. For ever?

J. ff. Heav'n knows, for ever all good angels guard
thee. [*Exit.*]

Bel. All ill ones sure had charge of me this moment.
Oh! give me daggers, fire or water:
How I could bleed, how burn, how drown, the waves
Huzzing and foaming round my sinking head,
Till I descended to the peaceful bottom!
Oh! there's all quiet, here all rage and fury:

The

The air's too thin, and pierces my weak brain;
 I long for thick substantial sleep: Hell! hell!
 Burst from the center, rage and roar aloud,
 If thou art half so hot, so mad as I am. [Exit.

S C E N E opening discovers a scaffold, and a wheel
 prepared for the execution of Pierre; then enter Of-
 ficers, Pierre and guards, a Friar, Executioner, and
 a great rabble. [Bell tolls.

Pier. My friend not yet come?

Enter Jaffier.

Jaff. Hold, eyes, be dry;
 Heart strengthen me, to bear
 This hideous sight, and humble me, to take
 The last forgiveness of a dying friend,
 Betray'd by my vile falshood to his ruin.
 Oh! *Pierre!*

Pier. Yet nearer.

Jaff. Crawling on my knees,
 And prostrate on the earth, let me approach thee:
 How shall I look up to thy injur'd face?

Pier. Dear to my arms, tho' thou'st undone my fame,
 I can't forget to love thee: Prithee, *Jaffier*,
 Forget that filthy blow my passion dealt thee.
 I am now preparing for the land of peace,
 And fain would have the charitable wishes
 Of all good men like thee to bless my journey.

Jaff. Good! I am the vilest creature, worse than
 e'er

Suffer'd the shameful fate thou'rt going to taste of.
 Why was I sent for, to be used thus kindly?

Off. The time grows short, your friends are dead
 already.

Jaff. Dead! (too!

Pier. Yes, dead, *Jaffier*; they've all dy'd like men
 Worthy their character.

Jaff. And what must I do?

Pier. Oh! *Jaffier!*

Jaff. Speak aloud thy burden'd soul,

And

And tell thy troubles to thy tortur'd friend.

Pier. Friend! Could'st thou yet be a friend, a generous friend,

I might hope comfort from thy noble sorrows,—
Heav'n knows I want a friend.

Jaff. And I a kind one,
That would not thus scorn my repenting virtue,
Or think, when he's to die, my thoughts are idle.

Pier. No! live, I charge thee, *Jaffier.*

Jaff. Yes, I will live:

But it shall be to see thy fall reveng'd
At such a rate as Venice long shall groan for.

Pier. Wilt thou?

Jaff. I will, by heav'n.

Pier. Then still thou'rt noble,

And I forgive thee, Oh!—yet—shall I trust?

Jaff. No I've been false already.

Pier. Do'st thou love me?

Jaff. Rip up my heart, and satisfy thy doubtings.

Pier. Curse on this weakness! [*He weeps.*]

Jaff. Tears! amazement! tears!

I never saw thee melted thus before;

And know there's something labouring in thy bosom,
That must have vent. Tho' I'm a villain tell me.

Pier. See'st thou that engine? [*Pointing to the wheel.*]

Jaff. Why?

Pier. Is't fit a soldier, who has liv'd with honour,
Fought nations' quarrels, and been crown'd with conquest,

Be expos'd a common carcase on a wheel?

Jaff. Hah!

Pier. Speak: Is't fitting?

Jaff. Fitting!

Pier. Yes, is't fitting?

Jaff. What's to be done?

Pier. I'd have thee undertake

Something that's noble, to preserve my memory
From the disgrace that's ready to attain it.

Off. The day grows late, Sir.

Pier. I'll make haste.—Oh! *Jaffier!*

The

Tho' thou'lt betray'd me, do me some way justice.

Jaff. No more of that : Thy wishes shall be satisfy'd;
I have a wife, and she shall bleed : My child too
Yield up his little throat, and all
T'appease thee——

[*Going away Pierre holds him.*

Pier. No—this—no more. [*He whispers Jaffier.*

Jaff. Hah ! is't then so ?

Pier. Most certainly.

Jaff. I'll do't.

Pier. Remember.

Off. Sir.

Pier. Come, now I'm ready.

[*He and Jaffier ascend the scaffold.*

Captain, you should be a gentleman of honour ;
Keep of the rabble, that I may have room
To entertain my fate, and die with decency.

[*Executioner prepares to bind him.*

You'll think on't ? [*to Jaffier.*

Jaff. 'Twon't grow stale before to-morrow.

Pier. Now *Jaffier* ! now I'm going. Now——

[*Executioner having bound him.*

Jaff. Have at thee,
Thou honest heart, then—here—— [*Stabs him.*
And this is well too. [*Then stabs himself.*

Pier. Now thou hast indeed been faithful.
This was done nobly—we have deceiv'd the senate.

Jaff. Bravely.

Pier. Ha, ha, ha——oh ! oh ! [*Dies.*

Jaff. Now, ye curs'd rulers,
Thus of the blood y'ave shed I make libation
And sprinkle it mingling ; may it rest upon you,
And all your race.——

Oh ! poor *Belvidera* !

Sir, I have a wife, bear this in safety to her,
A token that with my dying breath I bless'd her,
And the dear little infant behind me.
I'm sick——I'm quiet. [*Jaffier dies.*

Off. Bear this news to the senate,
And guard their bodies till there's farther orders.

[*Scene shuts upon them.*

Soft

Soft Musick. Enter Belvidera distracted, led by two of her Women, Priuli, and Servants.

Pri. Strengthen her heart with patience, pitying heav'n.

Bel. Come, come, come, come, come, nay, come to bed,

Prithee, my love.--The winds, hark how they whistle; And the rain beats: Oh! how the weather shrinks me! You are angry now, who cares? Pish, no indeed.

Chuse then, I say you shall not go, you shall not.

Whip your ill-nature; get you gone then; oh!

Are you return'd? see, father, here he's come again,

Am I to blame to love him? O thou dear one,

Why do you fly me? are you angry still then?

Jaffier, where art thou? Father, why do you do thus?

Stand off; don't hide him from me. He's there somewhere.

Stand off, I say: What! gone? Remember't, tyrant:

I may revenge myself for this trick, one day,

I'll do't-----I'll do't.

Enter Officer.

Pri. News, what news? [*Officer whispers Priuli.*

Off. Most sad, sir;

Jaffier, upon the scaffold, to prevent

A shameful death, slabb'd *Pierre*, and next himself:

Both fell together.

Pri. Daughter.

Bel. Ha! look there!

My husband bloody, and his friend too! Murder!

Who has done this? Speak to me, thou sad vision!

On these poor trembling knees I beg it: Vanish'd--

Here they went down: Oh! I'll dig, dig the den up.

You shan't delude me thus. Ho, *Jaffier*, *Jaffier*,

Peep up and give me but a look. I have him!

I've got him, father:

My love! my dear! my blessing! help me! help me!

They

They have hold on, and drag me to the bottom.

Nay—now they pull so hard—farewell— [*She di*

Pri. O! guard me from the fight on't.

Lead me into some place that's fit for mourning

Where the free air, light, and the chearful sun

May never enter : Hang it round with black;

Set up one taper, that may light a day,

As long as I've to live : And there all leave me:

Sparing no tears, when you this tale relate,

But bid all cruel fathers dread my fate.

[*Exeunt Omne*,

F I N I S.

